



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Public Library

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Internationally-Known Artist and Artificial Intelligence Pioneer Harold Cohen to be Interview on City TV Program

SAN DIEGO – An hour-long television interview featuring internationally known artist and artificial intelligence pioneer Harold Cohen will begin airing at 5 p.m. today on City TV 24. The program, hosted by Library Curator Mark-Elliott Lugo, is the latest in a series of in-depth interviews conducted by Lugo with leading San Diego-area artists. Titled *Profiles*, this series focuses on artists whose works are being exhibited through the San Diego Public Library's nationally recognized Visual Arts Program. The Cohen interview will air frequently throughout the month of September and intermittently over a period of months. Weekly program schedule information is available on City TV's website, <http://www.sandiego.gov/citytv/>.

Long celebrated worldwide for his innovative approach to artmaking and contributions to artificial intelligence (the branch of computer science concerned with making computers behave like humans), the 76-year-old Cohen has made numerous television appearances throughout his career. However, the City TV 24 interview is the most ambitious and detailed examination of Cohen's art ever to be produced for television, and is recommended viewing for anyone interested in contemporary art or computer technology.

The *Profiles* interview was filmed in conjunction with Cohen's current exhibition at the Earl & Birdie Taylor/Pacific Beach Branch library. Titled *Untouched by Hands: Recent Digital Prints by AARON, a Computer Program Written by Harold Cohen*, the exhibition showcases thirty-six works created since 2001. Although Cohen is in demand as a keynote speaker and lecturer at symposia and conferences throughout the world, and his art has been shown in or purchased by dozens of important museums, institutions, and corporations worldwide, *Untouched by Hands* is the artist's first solo exhibition in San Diego in more than thirty years. *Untouched by Hands* is free to the general public and will run through September 30. The Taylor library is located at 4275 Cass Street, one block south of Grand Avenue in Pacific Beach. Library hours are Mondays and Wednesdays, noon to 8 p.m.; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; and Sundays, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about the exhibition, the public can call the library at (858) 581-9934 or the library curator at (619) 238-6627.

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**Artist and Artificial Intelligence Pioneer Harold Cohen to be Interviewed
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Cohen has achieved a stellar international reputation for his creation of AARON, a revolutionary computer software program that comes remarkably close to possessing the creative instincts and capabilities of a human artist. AARON's development and evolution has occupied Cohen since the 1970s and is the longest continually developed software program in existence. It has also made Cohen a revered figure in two seemingly disparate worlds: that of contemporary fine art and prestigious museums, and another, more rarified one, among the gurus of artificial intelligence.

Perhaps even more astounding is the caliber of AARON's most recent art: a series of brilliantly colored digital prints that range in size up to four feet by eight feet. In terms of complexity and aesthetics, these works are superb. Not only are they stunning technical achievements, but their originality, scale, graphic power, sophistication, and color rival those of conventionally conceived and executed art.

An integral component of the exhibition is a state-of-the-art computer system that enables gallery visitors to watch AARON in action as it creates new works. Cohen, in the guise of AARON, raises important questions about the nature of art, creativity, perception, and even life itself. As he has commented, "I may be the first artist in history to have a posthumous exhibition of new paintings."

Museums that have acquired Cohen's works as part of their permanent collections include the Tate Gallery, London; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; the Yale Center for British Art; the Art Gallery of Toronto; and many more.

Supplemental funding and technical support for *Untouched by Hands* was provided by CompUSA, one of the nation's largest retailers and resellers of personal computer-related products and services.

Lugo, host of the Cohen interview and the *Profiles* artist series, established the San Diego Public Library's Visual Arts Program in 1997. He is the former art critic for the *Evening Tribune* and *San Diego Magazine* and is believed to be the only librarian/resident curator for the visual arts in a public library in the United States. Through the Visual Arts Program, Lugo has curated more than sixty library exhibitions featuring works by San Diego's contemporary artists, and currently oversees four library venues. When the New Main Library building is completed in 2007, Lugo will run the New Main Library Gallery, a state-of-the-art exhibition space and rooftop sculpture garden located on the top floor of the building.

Over the years, the Visual Arts Program has earned considerable recognition for innovation in library cultural programming and the high quality of its exhibitions, lectures, and other art-related activities. The program's stated mission is "to demonstrate the library's role as a cultural institution embracing a broad range of disciplines, while assisting San Diego's mid-career and older artists in achieving wider local, regional, and national attention." Visual Arts Program activities are made possible by funds generated through gallery sales, a grant from the Frederic Whitaker and Eileen Monaghan Whitaker Foundation, contributions from individuals, and volunteer efforts.

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